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ABSTRACT

Dance has often been a significant part of a cultural heritage. Most of the religious organizations which were formed just after the United States achieved its independence, however, rejected many European religious customs, including dance. Despite this, the Mormon church not only allowed dance, but advocated and sponsored it. Dance was an important part of Mormon social life throughout their emigration westward, and continued to be so when they reached Utah. The Mormon church has continued to emphasize dance as a major means of bringing church members together. (This document provides numerous examples of the popularity of dance among Mormons throughout their history.) (MK)

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ANALYSIS OF CULTURE

When we speak of culture we think of a commendable quality. Upon careful analysis we will realize that there are varieties and degrees of culture. It is commendable for a people to be in possession of a high degree of culture, and probably not to their credit if they are short of this attainment.

Not long ago I heard a man say, "I'm gonna take some courses and get some culture." Culture is not for one to get. Culture is growth, progression--a matter of becoming. There will be a too brief development of the theme here, that Mormons had a form of culture in their dancing. Considering their total culture, a brief report on their dancing is but an "aspect."

It might be informative to see what modern writers say about "culture." Powys states,

> Culture is what is left over after you have forgotten all you have definitely set out to learn and in this sally you get at least a useful warning against associating culture too closely with the academic paraphernalia of education.[1]

Powys brings out the point that a true culture is indigenous. It is dependent upon the resources of the self. It is not education, but it is the product or the issue of education, thinking, and living. "Just as the best education is merged and swallowed up in culture, so the best culture is merged and swallowed up in something else."[2]

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[1]Powys, John C., The Meaning of Culture, W.W. Norton & Co., New York. 1939. p. vii.

[2]Ibid., p. 3.

HISTORIC BACKGROUND

Mormon dancing was an outward manifestation of an inner joy, an inner grace, expressing itself in group response and group participation. As a criterion for culture it met Powys' requirements in that it was "deeper rooted and more widely human than any trained aesthetic taste, or any industriously acquired scholarship."[1] The Mormons in the time of the founding of the Church, and later at the beginning of community life in Utah employed dancing as one of their sociological-cultural patterns. Dancing is a cultural aspect of Mormon life today.

Dancing has been, through the ages, a manifestation of man's thinking in social, religious, and sometimes aggressive behavior. Through the many centuries of man's history dance has most often been considered reputable, although there has been a period of time when dance has brought disfavor upon those who engaged in it. Dance was originally part of religious ceremony. It was a creditable activity, according to the Bible, and was later employed in Medieval churches as a part of church ceremony.

Philosophers and historians generally look with favor upon dancing as a cultural outgrowth of living. Folk dance "belongs to the people. It is simply expression. It formulates people's lives. It is their life...."[2]

By the title of his best known work, The Dance of Life, Havelock Ellis appears to be an exponent of the dance, but actually he is a philosopher, and as such, he states:

> Dancing and building are the two primary and essential arts. The art of dancing stands at the source of all the arts that express themselves first in the human person... There is no primary art outside these two arts, for their origin

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[1]Powys, op. cit., p. 3.

[2]Brownell, Baker, Art Is Action, Harper and Brothers, New York, 1939. p. 43.

> is far earlier than man himself; and dancing came first. If we are indifferent to the art of dancing, we have failed to understand, not merely the supreme mainfestation of physical life, but also the supreme symbol of spiritual life.[1]

In 1830 when the Mormon church was organized and during the next few decades, the Christian church had an attitude of hostility toward recreation. In earlier Colonial America the state, too, shared the attitude. Work had occupied a position of paramount importance because people had to accomplish a great amount of work to survive. Especially was this true of newly settled areas where industriousness was needed. America had been founded by people who revolted against the leisure class of Europe. These first comers to our shores had resented the idleness and the pleasures of their oppressors. They rationalized and called those things sinful which were quite beyond their reach. Some of these attitudes have been expressed:

> Play must be forbidden in any and all its forms. The children shall be instructed in this matter in such a way as to show them, through the presentation of religious principles, the wastefulness and folly of all play.[2]

In 1792 the Methodist Episcopal church in America stated: "We prohibit play in the strongest terms."[3]

Reverend C. T. Bedell, Rector of St. Andrew's Church in Philadelphia, asserted that "there is also a gravity and dignity of deportment which can make no fellowship with the lightness and frivolity of a theatre or ballroom. A professing Christian, then, engaged in such pursuits, loses at once the dignity of his assumed character."[4]

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[1]Ellis, Havelock, The Dance of Life, Houghton Mifflin, New York, 1923. p. 37.

[2]Professor Franke; Quoted
Judd, Charles H., Genetic Psychology for Teachers, D. Appleton & Co., New York. 1903. p. 72.

[3]Lehman, H.C., and Witty, Paul A., Psychology of Play Activities, A.S. Barnes Co., New York, 1927. pp. 1-2.

[4]Bedell, G. T., The Renunciation: An Essay on Wordly Amusements, New York. 1846. p. 28

While some churches strictly forbade any form of dancing, in other churches the concession was made to allow dancing in the form of singing games or play party games. A report on southern Illinois, which was peopled by persons from Tennessee, Kentucky, and Ohio, indicates that they could play these games only when they were accompanied by their own singing.[1] An innovation of the day was the "promenade" in which couples strolled the dance hall or "promenaded" to the music for the duration of the party.

The play-party was the only acceptable form of dance, and Owens tells why "dancing" was taboo.

> The play-party owes much of the impetus of its development to the religious fervor of early America. In practically all communities predominantly Protestant, dancing was, and is, taboo. The fiddle was the "instrument of the devil," and all who danced to its strains were unfit for membership in the community church.[2]

He explains that church members who danced the dances of the world had to seek the pardon of their membership or be expelled.

> For the history of these play-party games, religion was almost as important as nationality. These people were Quakers, Disciples, Methodists, Baptists, or Presbyterians as to creed, but they were one in opposing the dance as a wicked sport. Most of these scrupulous consciences did not, however, detect anything wrong in the traditional "playing games" of the young people. If these were follies they were time honored. Parents and grandparents had enjoyed them, and with this for recommendation they were usually free from the suspicion of evil.[3]

It has been brought out that the fiddle was the instrument of the devil, therefore, the play party games were accompanied by the participants' own singing and not by musical instruments. Swings usually were not permitted in the dances, but where they did exist, they must be performed by holding hands, rather than by doing a "waist swing." Even with "waist swings" some

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[1]McIntosh, David S., Southern Illinois Singing Games and Songs, Southern Illinois Normal University, Carbondale, Illinois, 1946. pp. 2-3.

[2]Owens, William A., Swing and Turn: Texas Play Party Games, Tardy Publishing Co., Dallas, Texas, 1936. p. xxi.

[3]Wolford, Leah Jackson, The Play Party in Indiana, Indiana Historical Commission, Indianapolis, Indiana, 1946. p. 12.

participants were suspect for their attitudes as explained,

> The attitude which the players have toward the games is criticized by the ministers, who, with few exceptions, preach that both the play-party and the dance are on the some plane with card-playing and must not be countenanced by church members.[1]

Another writer explains diversity of opinion on the matter:

> ... It is clear that the church was divided on the question of the play-party. On the one hand it might tolerate and even encourage the play-party as the lesser of two evils; on the other hand, fanaticism might proceed to the point where the play-party was outlawed along with the dance.[2]

Church-sponsored recreation did not exist in the United States in 1830. In the 1870's and 1880's the general concept of the church serving as a social institution was just beginning to come into existence. It now is considered the responsibility of churches to provide social activity and recreation for membership. More than half of the churches in America now assume this as a function. The Mormon church is one of these.

THE MORMON BACKGROUND

The Mormon philosophy of play as manifested in dance was radically different from that of other Christian churches in the half century from 1830-1880. The Mormons not only were allowing play, but they were advocating it and sponsoring it during this period. The membership of the early Mormon church was drawn from Puritanical New England, and from other areas where churches were opposed to play, and particularly hostile to dancing, though sometimes admitting play-party games.

The factors which allowed for such a strong variation in social pattern

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[1]Wolford, Leah Jackson, The Play Party in Indiana, Indiana Historical Commission, Indianapolis, Indiana, 1946. p. 12.

[2]Botkin, B.A., The American Play Party Song, University of Nebraska Lincoln, Nebraska, 1937. p. 21.

are probably as follows:

1. Joseph Smith and Brigham Young, the first and second presidents of the Mormon Church, stressed that temporal and physical welfare were the bases for spiritual welfare.

2. The Mormons were isolated socially and sometimes geographically. This isolation allowed them independence in developing the social plan best suited to their needs.

3. Release for mass suffering was required. A mass release provided the most wholesome adjustment.

4. Varying cultures, areas, and nationalities came together. Play, primarily manifesting itself in dance, was the best socializing force, and the one into which there could be an easy social entry.

Joseph Smith, the Prophet-founder and first President of the Church, over six feet tall, weighed 212 pounds and was activity minded by nature. He enjoyed pistol shooting, baseball, walking, hiking, wrestling and horseback riding. For Saturday, September 22, 1838, he recorded: "I went out early in the morning, returned to breakfast at half past seven, and took an airing on horseback at nine in the morning."[1] On a Friday in October, 1842, he wrote "In the afternoon I rode out into the city and took a little exercise."[2] According to his own writings, he ice skated and engaged in "pulling sticks," a popular sport of those days. One of his biographers has written that Joseph Smith could high jump a bar equal to his own height.

Joseph Smith was a competent, skillful performer in active sports, he encouraged others in those events, and promoted many other recreational activities. He favored music, drama, boating (He owned half interest in a

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[1]Smith, Joseph, History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, Period I. Vol. L, P. 362

[2]Ibid., p. 180.

steamboat the Maid of Iowa), dancing, and wood cutting bees.

In his own words, "A large party supped at my house, and spent the evening in music, dancing, etc., in a most cheerful and friendly manner."[1] A New Year's party was held in Smith's home that same year in which there were music and dancing until morning.

Emphasis was placed upon good company and children and adults were warned against vain, foolish amusements. Emphasis was placed upon training the young. "How important that they be taught to be sober, and avoid every vain and foolish amusement...What is learnt in childhood is retained in age so then, let us teach our children the great virtues that make men good."[2]

A youth organization under the leadership of Joseph Smith met at the home of Heber C. Kimball late in January, 1843. Part of the conversation concerned itself with the "follies of youth" and "then too frequent attendance at balls, parties, etc."[3] The next meeting convened at the home of President Smith. Heber C. Kimball was the speaker, and his speech was reported by Monroe, secretary to the group.

> He warned them against frequenting balls and such places, which, he said, would generally lead to many evil practices, and would draw away the mind from more innocent amusements...He said "he had not now, nor never had, any objections to having young people meet together in social parties, or indulging in any rational amusement; but, he strongly opposed carrying it to extremes, as it generally was.[4]

This organization was formed to serve many purposes in addition to recreation, and was a forerunner of subsequent youth organizations.

A letter addressed to the editor of Times and Seasons, the official church publication, queried, "I should be very much gratified by your informing

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[1]Smith, Joseph, History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Period I, Vol. I, P. 362.

[2]Evening and Morning Star, Vol. I, No. 1, June 1832, P. 8.

[3]Monroe, J.M., "A Short Sketch of the Rise of the Young Gentlemen and Ladies Relief Society of Nauvoo," Times and Seasons, Vol. 4, No. 10, April 1, 1843. pp. 154-157.

[4]Ibid. p. 155.

me, and not only me, but the public, through the medium of your valuable paper...what your views are in regard to balls and dancing, as it has lately existed in our city."[1]

John Taylor, editor, explained the whole Mormon thought of that day in his answer:

> There certainly can be no harm in dancing, in and of itself, as an abstract principle, but like all other athletic exercises, it has a tendency to invigorate the system and to promote health... Therefore, looking at dancing merely as an athletic exercise, or as something having a tendency to add to the grace and dignity of man, by enabling him to have a more easy and graceful attitude, certainly no one could object to it...As an abstract principle... we have no objections to it; but when it leads people into bad company and causes them to keep untimely hours, it has a tendency to enervate and weaken the system, and lead to profligate and intemperate habits. And so far as it does this, so far is it injurious to society, and corrupting the morals of youth.[2]

The early Mormons believed that public dancing should not be approved. Members should not go to public dance halls and expose themselves to base elements. Joseph Smith records a case while the Saints were at Kirtland, Ohio, wherein twenty two members, male and female, were disfellowshipped for "uniting with the world in a dance."[3] So the Mormons were in favor of dancing, in the right environment--their own.

An excerpt from a Daughters of Utah Pioneers pamphlet tells of one incident worth recording:

> The labors of the day in the Nauvoo Temple having been brought to a close at 8:30, it was thought proper to have a little season of recreation. Accordingly, Brother Hans C. Hanson was invited to produce his violin, which he did, and played several lively airs, accompanied by Elisha Averett on his flute, among others, some very good lively dancing tunes. This was too much for the gravity of Brother Joseph Young, who indulged in dancing a hornpipe, and was soon joined by several others, and before the dance was over, several

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[1] Times and Seasons, "To Parents" by Hemoni, Vol. V, No. 7, April 1, 1844, p. 486.
[2] Ibid.
[3] Smith, Joseph, History of the Church, Vol. II. pp. 519-520.

> French fours were indulged in. The first was opened by President Brigham Young and Sister Whitney and Elder Heber C. Kimball and partner. The spirit of dancing increased until the whole floor was covered with dancers.[1]

A number of Nauvoo musicians formed a Quadrille band for use at dancing parties, and were given the full approval of President Smith.

Under Joseph Smith's leadership dance and other forms of recreation were sponsored because his followers were socially isolated, because they were organized with intimate social relationships, because they were good followers, and because the doctrine had been propounded "Man is that he might have joy." Because they differed from other people in religious beliefs, it was easy for them to differ in their thinking about dancing, which had become a religious or church affair. They were beyond the realm of social control of other groups, and free to develop their own social pattern. Perhaps such unusual action is evidence of a culture for as Powys states, "The more culture a man has, the more austerely does he abide by his own taste."[2] In this early social isolation, and in this independence of thought and action, dance, a cultural aspect of Mormon life, was given its foundation.

> The truth is that as education is only real education when it is a key to something beyond itself, no culture is only real culture when it has diffused itself into the very root and fibre of our endurance of life. Culture becomes in this way something more than culture. It becomes wisdom; a wisdom that can accept defeat, a wisdom that can turn defeat into victory.[3]

On June 27, 1844, Joseph Smith was assassinated and Brigham Young became the acting leader of the Church. He followed the precedent of Joseph Smith, by sponsoring recreational activities.[4] He was confronted with problems of mass migration and colonization under most adverse conditions.

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[1]Carter, Kate B., Bands and Orchestras of Early Days, Daughters of Utah Pioneers Historical Pamphlet, December, 1941

[2]Powys, op.cit. p. 9.

[3]Powys, Ibid. p. 4.

[4]Gates, Susa Young, and Widtsoe, Leah D., Story of Brigham Young, Macmillan Co., New York, 1930. p. 242.

His followers were a harried people, as well prepared as could be, under the circumstances, and assembled from diverse areas.

In the October, 1844 issue of Times and Seasons, he warned the Saints

> not to mingle in the vain amusements and sins of the world... and so far at least as the members of the church are concerned, we would advise that balls, dances and other vain and useless amusements be neither countenanced nor patronized; they have been borne with, in some instances heretofore for the sake of peace and good will. But it is not now a time for dancing or frolics but a time of mourning, and of humiliation and prayer... If the people were all righteous, it would do to dance, and to have music, feasting and merryment...All amusement in which saints and sinners are mingled tends to corruption, and has a baneful influence in religious society.[1]

He advocated not mingling with the world in recreation, and thus he might seem to have been in opposition to dance and to recreation.

Brigham Young not only enjoyed recreational pursuits himself, but he often included discussions of recreation in his sermons to his people. Dance came in for attention, too. Recreation was not a tenet of religious teaching, but was a part of the life of a religious man. He felt that dancing has its place. It is to be seen that he had a feeling of propriety. He sometimes counselled for dance and other amusements; sometimes he opposed them. His attitude may seem inconsistent when we take a single instance, but in his over all philosophy great consistency was shown. Propriety and need were the prime influencing factors in Brigham Young's philosophy of dance in recreation.

After the Mormons had crossed the Mississippi from Nauvoo, they camped at Sugar Creek.

> The night of March 1, (1846) after they had pitched camp in the usual manner of emigrants, President Young has the 'brethern and sisters' out in a dance to the tune of Captain Pitts brass band.

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[1] Times and Seasons, Vol. V, No. 17, October 1, 1844, pp. 668-70.

> A dance! How could they? Indeed, the Iowans who gathered round could scarcely believe their eyes.
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> The men cleared away the snow in a sheltered place. Warmed and lighted by the blazing logs of their fire, fifty couples, old and young, stepped out in the dance.[1]

While the Mormons were camped at Winter Quarters in 1846, winter came on and many of the Saints died. Others were cold, hungry, grieving or ill. Brigham Young realized the need for developing their courage for the task that lay ahead. He called for several loads of wood to be piled near the bowery, and on a certain evening the people were called together. In the light of the cheering fire he said to his people, "I want you to sing and dance and forget your troubles... We must think of the future that lies ahead and the work which is ours. We are to build the Kingdom of God in a new Zion. Let's have some music and all of you dance." According to Milton R. Hunter[2] they danced waltzes, polkas, and quadrilles to Pitts' brass band. During the trek quadrilles and minuets were danced on the hard ground around the camp-fires.

In 1846 Colonel Thomas L. Kane witnessed a party held in honor of the Mormon Battalion just prior to its leaving. He described the event in these words before the Historical Society of Pennsylvania, March 26, 1850:

> The afternoon before was appropriated to a farewell ball; and a more merry dancing rout I have never seen...It was the custom, whenever the larger camps rested for a few days together to make great arbors, or boweries, as they called them, of poles and brush...In one of these where the ground had been trodden firm and hard...was gathered now the mirth and beauty of the Mormon Israel...With the rest, attended the Elders of the Church within call, including nearly all the chiefs of the High Council, with their wives and children. They, the gravest and most trouble-worn, seemed the most anxious of any to be the first to throw off the burden of heavy thoughts. Their leading off the dancing in a great double cotillion, was the signal bade the festivity commence.

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[1]Cameron, Marguerite, This is the Place, Caxton Printers, Caldwell, Idaho, 1939. p. 98.

[2]Hunter, Milton R., Utah in Her Western Setting.

> To the canto of debonair violins, the cheer of horns, the jingle of sleigh-bells, and the jovial snoring of the tambourine, they did dance!...French fours, Copenhagen jigs, Virginia reels, and the like, forgotten figures executed with the spirit of people too happy to be slow, or bashful, or constrained. Light hearts, lithe figures, and light feet had it their own way from an early hour till after the sun dipped behind the sharp skyline of the Omaha hills...Well as I knew the peculiar fondness of the Mormons for music, their orchestra in service on the occasion astonished me by its numbers and fine drill...When the refugees from Nauvoo were hastening to part with their table ware, jewelry, and almost every other fragment of metal wealth which they possessed that was not iron, they had never thought of giving up the instruments of this favorite band.[1]

At Winter Quarters on January 14, 1847, Brigham Young is credited with having had a revelation, which reads in part: "If thou art merry, praise the Lord with singing, with music, with dancing, and with a prayer of praise and thanksgiving."[2] This gave the Mormons the final sanction they needed for dancing, the sustaining and morale building activity which was to become a part of their cultural pattern.

Dance was a ready relief from the tribulations and the oppressions of mind. It was a relaxation from toil, a tool of social intercourse, and it maintained group solidarity. Clarissa Young Spencer, a daughter of Brigham Young has written:

> One of father's most outstanding qualities as a leader was the manner in which he looked after the temporal and social welfare of his people along with guiding them in their spiritual needs. On the great trek across the plains when everyone but the most feeble walked the greater part of the way, the Saints would be gathered around the campfire for evening entertainment, if the weather was at all favorable. Then songs would be sung, music played by the fiddlers, and the men and women would forget the weariness of walking fifteen miles or so over a trackless desert while they joined in dancing the quadrille. It was his way of keeping up "morale" before such a word was ever coined.[3]

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[1]Kane, Thomas L., The Mormons, King and Band, Philadelphia, 1850. pp. 29-32.

[2]Doctrine and Covenants of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, George Q. Cannon & Sons, Salt Lake City, 1898. Section 136, Verse 28, p. 491.

[3]Spencer, C.Y., One Who Was Valiant, The Caxton Printers, Ltd., Caldwell, Idaho, 1940. p. 162.

Jay B. Nash states:

> In times of crises, individuals draw closer and closer together effecting group solidarity...Individual differences are overlooked, the good of all becomes paramount...There is a unity of purpose--there is morale.[1]

The first group of Mormon pioneers left Winter Quarters on April 5, 1847. In this company of one hundred and forty eight there were only three women, and these were married. Many forms of amusement were participated in, including some rough-and-tumble dancing in which the men whirled one another about. On the morning of May 29th Brigham Young called his company together and said, "I have let the brethern dance and fiddle...night after night to see what they will do." He spoke sharply to them of excesses in all things,

> You do read of men praising the Lord in the dance, but who ever heard of praising the Lord in a game of cards?... If any man has sense enough to play a game of cards, or dance a little without wanting to keep it up all the time...Last winter when we had our seasons of recreation in the council house, I went forth in the dance frequently, but did my mind run on it? No. To be sure, when I was dancing, my mind was on the dance, but the moment I stopped in the middle or end of a tune, my mind was engaged in prayer...[2]

After reaching the valley of the Great Salt Lake some of the original company returned to meet other saints. A group led by John Taylor met this band at the Sweetwater River, about four hundred miles east of the Great Salt Lake. A supper was held in celebration and

> preparations were made for dancing; and soon was added to the sweet confusion of laughter and cheerful conversation the merry strains of the violin, and the strong clear voice of the prompter directing the dancers through the mazes of quadrilles, Scotch-reels, French-fours and other figures of nameless dances.[3]

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[1]Nash, Jay B., Building Morale, A.S. Barnes & Co., New York, 1942, p. 150.

[2]Clayton, William (Quotes Brigham Young), Journal Published in Heart Throbs of the West, Vol. VI, Daughters of Utah Pioneers. pp. 254-255.

[3]Roberts, B. H., The Life of John Taylor, G.Q. Cannon & Sons, Salt Lake City, 1892. p. 192.

At the close of the gala time Elder Taylor commented, "We felt mutually edified and blessed."[1]

Dancing was the most apparent play form of the Mormons on their westward trek. The play of a people is the most revealing single activity in which they engage. Various theories exist for play as a sociological phenomenon. Herbert Spencer[2] claims that play was merely the expression of surplus energy. This theory cannot support itself for dancing emigrants who were foot weary from travelling the rough and trying miles to their western goal. Rousseau,[3] Karl Groos,[4] McDougall,[5] and Joseph Lee[6] explain that an innate desire is the motivating factor in play. This theory can be supported when one understands that the rigors of the travelling day brought satisfactions in accomplishment, but brought little chance for social intercourse. Mitchell and Mason[7] assert that play is a natural means of self expression. Writers in the field of sociology emphasize the group factors in participation in play activities.

The Mormon engagement in dancing can be explained by the inclusion of elements from those theories that are accepted above. Man has a natural tendency for activity and self-expression. It is a diversion from routine work, a method of relaxation and rest, even though it continues to be motor activity. It brings added joy to life and recognizes the factor that group activity is needed.

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[1]Roberts, op.cit. p. 192.

[2]Spencer, Herbert, The Principles of Psychology, Vol. II, D. Appleton & Co., New York, 1875. pp. 629-30.

[3]Bowen, W.P., and Mitchell, E.D., Theory of Organized Play, A.S. Barnes & Co., New York, 1934, p. 186.

[4]Groos, Karl, The Play of Man, D. Appleton & Co., New York, 1901.

[5]McDougall, W., An Introduction to Social Psychology, 14th Ed., John W. Luce & Co.. Boston, Massachusetts, 1921. pp. 110-115.

[6]Lee, Joseph, Play in Education, The Macmillan Co., New York,1915. p. 111.

[7]Mitchell, E. D., and Mason, B.S., The Theory of Play, A.S. Barnes & Co., New York, 1934. p. 65.

Dancing, during the migrations, kept people warm in group assembly during cold evenings on the great plains. Dancing, combined with prayer and short inspirational talks kept the emigrants in better accord than long assemblies with no seating provisions. A naturally clear area in a wagon enclosure was selected, a fire lighted and warmed the fringes, and the orchestra was simple in organization.

Some emigrant companies were fortunate enough to have a hand organ. Usually, without its being removed from the wagon, it formed the basis for the accompaniment. Other instruments used were the fiddle, accordion and flute.

In the collection of musical instruments at the Utah State Capitol is a concertina which belonged to John Webster and is said to have been played for social events of the pioneers in their westward trek across the plains. A lyre and a left handed violin belonging to William Pitt were music makers in 1847 in the long trek. William Pitt also played the trumpet in the Nauvoo Brass Band which remained quite intact and played later in the Salt Lake Theater. William Fowler's violin and piccolo are in the collection. As a company captain he came with English emigrants, presumably in the handcart companies. Handcarts were the most usually employed transportation with those peoples. His instruments were said to have provided music on the journey.

Reports of pioneer activity give confirmation to the place of music, song, and dance for pioneers on the march. Mrs. Ebenezer B. Beesley says her husband played his violin with the British handcart companies.[1] The collection includes two flutes of his that are said to have been played in early day dances. "William Clayton in his journal...speaks of the part music

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[1]Carter, Kate B., Heart Throbs of the West, Daughters of Utah Pioneers, Vol. 6, p. 379.

played in the lives of the tired pioneer, when at the end of a day's journey the musician would strike up a tune and the group would join in dance and song."[1]

It is not to be thought that dances were common. They were not held every night.

> Morning and evening prayers and songs of praise were never omitted in the camps, and occasionally a dance was enjoyed, the companies generally being favored with musical talent.[2]

THE MORMONS IN UTAH

In the Great Salt Lake Valley the Mormons had recreations of a family and community nature. During the first few years they danced on dirt floors in log cabins and these dances and parties "were a regular and important part of their lives."[3] Space was cleared by moving the furniture out of doors and "through many a winter night could be heard the strains of the violins accompanying the dancers."[4]

Captain Howard Stansbury, who explored the basin of the old Lake Bonneville, was in the valley from August 27, 1849, until August 27, 1850. He wrote, ". . . balls, parties and merry-makings. . . formed a prominent and agreeable feature of the society."[5] Stansbury said that Brigham Young mingled freely at these events, tempering them with his influence.

In 1850 an amusement resort was built up in the hot springs area at

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[1]Carter, Kate B. Daughters of Utah Pionners Historical Pamphlet, December, 1941. p. 117.

[2]Smith, G.A., The Rise, Progress and Travels of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, 2nd Ed., Deseret News Office, Salt Lake City, 1872. p. 18.

[3]Spencer, C.Y., One Who Was Valiant, The Caxton Printers, Ltd., Caldwell, Idaho, 1940. p. 162.

[4]Ibid.

[5]Stansbury, Howard, Exploration and Survey of the Valley of the Great Salt Lake of Utah, Philadelphia, 1852. p. 138.

the north of the city. An elevated wooden dance floor provided quite an atmosphere, and some of these parties were called "balls."

Mrs. Spencer tells of a party at Brigham's Mill, on Christmas night. A dinner was held at midnight and dancing continued until five in the morning.[1]

Dancing in Utah is considered by church historians to have been important, for, "this activity was probably the most common amusement of the founding of our State, being enjoyed in every city, town and hamlet in Utah.[2]

> In some of the settlements dancing schools were established. In Brigham City as early as 1853 a dancing school was opened. It was under the direction of John Bynon. "Money Musk," "Twin Sisters," and all of the other old dances were taught. "Blindman Jones" with his fiddle furnished the music for these occasions. Later he was accompanied by the accordion.[3]

Dancing groups were formed and schools of dance were organized.

> "The Mormons love dancing," says the apostate John Hyde. "Almost every third man is a fiddler, and every one must learn to dance. In the winter of 1854-1855, there were dancing schools in almost every one of the nineteen school houses, and necessarily so much more attention to dancing involved so much less attention to study. Just so much less education and just so much more injury."[4]

In Andrew Jenson's Encyclopedic History it is reported that the first recorded celebration of Independence Day by the Utah Pioneers was held at Black Rock Beach. The procession of 150 carriages took four hours to make the trip. Dancing, bathing and other activities were engaged in. A night encampment was made, and the party returned the next day. Successively, Garfield beach in 1875, Lake Shore resort in 1878, Lake Park in 1886, and Saltair in 1893 were built as bathing resorts with dance floors or pavilions.

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[1]Spencer, C.Y., pp. 162-3.

[2]Hunter, Milton R., Utah in Her Western Setting, Deseret News Press, 1943. p. 208.

[3]Young, Levi Edgar, The Founding of Utah, Scribners and Sons, New York, 1923. p. 329.

[4]Quoted in Neff, Andrew Love, History of Utah 1847 to 1869, Deseret News Press, 1940. p. 599.

Lindsay Gardens in 1865 was built with a bowery for dancing, which was replaced in 1875 by a large dance hall. Calder's park, later Wandamere, and now Nibley Park had a large dance hall in 1865. Fuller's Hill, a park lying between Fourth and Fifth South Streets and bounded by Tenth and Eleventh East Streets had a dance hall in 1862 when Magnus Olsen's band played there.

In the spring of 1870 William Wagstaff made a park in the present Gilmer Park area. A dancing bowery was added. It is described by William F. Handley "as built with a wooden floor where three quadrille sets could participate at one time and leave room for the 'fiddlers.'"[1] Wagner's Brewery Resort was set up in the mouth of Emigration Canyon in 1865. There was scheduled dancing on all holidays. Many other resorts, parks and outing areas were developed later, to accomodate dancing and other recreational activities.

At the Legislative Festival held in the Territorial House, March 4, 1852, Brigham Young expressed his idea about recreation and dance. Of dance he said:

> I want it distinctly understood that fiddling and dancing are no part of our worship. The question may be asked, What are they for, then? I answer, that my body may keep pace with my mind. My mind labors like a man logging, all the time; and this is the reason why I am fond of these pastimes--they give me a privilege to throw everything off, and shake myself, that my body may exercise, and my mind rest. What for? To get strength, and be renewed and quickened, and enlivened, and animated, so that my mind may not wear out."[2]

He further explained his own participation in the dance as a recreational activity. Brigham Young looked upon play as an essential activity for a change of routine, and to provide relaxation. He thought of it as something for the temporal, to sustain the spiritual. He always emphasized moderation.

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[1]Carter, Kate B., Heart Throbs of the West, Vol. 5, p. 96.
[2]Brigham Young, Discourses Selected by Widstoe, John A., Deseret Book Co., 1925, pp. 373-74.

The capitol city of Utah was established at Fillmore. The 4th of July, 1852, was celebrated "with spirit at Fillmore City, the capitol of Utah, by orations, toasts, the firing of guns, etc., closing with a grand ball in the evening."[1]

The "Social Hall" in Salt Lake City was dedicated Saturday, January 1, 1853. The opening exercises culminated with a grand ball in the evening. Invitations were issued by Brigham Young.

An artist with Colonel Fremont's expedition, S.N. Cawalks, was invited to a ball in April, 1854. He wrote of it:

> The utmost order and strictest decorum prevailed. Polkas and waltzing were not danced; country dances, cotillions, quadrilles, etc., were permitted.
>
> At the invitation of Governor Young, I opened the ball with one of his wives. The Governor, with a beautiful partner, stood vis-a-vis. An old fashioned cotillion was danced with much grace by the ladies, and the Governor acquitted himself very well on the "light fantastic toe."[2]

Benjamin Ferris, secretary of Utah Territory in the winter of 1852-53, received an invitation to the Social Hall for a party in January of 1853. As did all others, he contributed his share of the expenses of the party. This is his description:

> The party was large, and, after a goodly number had assembled, the business of the evening was opened by a short prayer; after which dancing commenced, and was kept up during the whole evening. A band of music, which performed exceedingly well, was stationed on the raised platform, and there was room enough on the main floor for half a dozen sets of cotillions.[3]

Mrs. Ferris, the secretary's wife, wrote, "Dancing continued fast and furious till a late hour. Each man danced with two women at a time."[4]

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[1] Milennial Star, Vol. 14, No. 38, November 13, 1852. p. 601.
[2] Cawalks, S.N., Incidents of Travel and Adventure in the Far West, Derby and Jackson, New York, 1857, pp. 156-157.
[3] Ferris, B.G., Utah and the Mormons, Harper and Brothers, New York, 1854. p. 304.
[4] Ferris, Mrs. B.G., The Mormons at Home, Dix and Edwards, New York, 1956. p. 157.

A french traveller claimed that the Mormons had invented a new type of dance , a double quadrille, in which each gentleman had two ladies.[1]

Levi Edgar Young says of the early day dances:

> The dance consisted of a common movement, such as swaying or stamping, done by a group of men and women to the accompaniment of rhythmic cries and hand-clappings. Chief among these were the quadrilles, polkas, Scotch reels, and minuets. . .A waltz was now and then indulged in.[2]

John Hyde, Jr., said that the church was opposed to waltzes, mazurkas, and schottisches but favored cotillions, contra-dances and reels.[3] Burton said that polkas were disapproved of. He described a thirteen hour party in the Social Hall with Brigham Young leading off in the first cotillion:

> Dancing seems to be considered an edifying exercise. The Prophet dances, the Apostles dance,the Bishops dance..." The dance "is not in the languid, done-up style that polite Europe affects; as in the days of our grandparents, "positions" are maintained, steps are elaborately executed, and a somewhat severe muscular exercise is the result.[4]

Professor Dominico Ballo, trained in Milan, and ex-bandmaster of West Point, was the leader of the Social Hall orchestra. His services as director were voluntary. He was a clarinet player of exceptional ability. Brigham Young made frequent statements to explain his attitude toward dance:

> Those that have kept their covenants and served their God, if they wish to exercise themselves in any way, to rest their minds and tire their bodies, go and enjoy yourselves in the dance...[5]

At the dedication of the Salt Lake Theater, March 6, 1862, he said:

> There are many of our aged brethern and sisters, who through the traditions of their fathers and the requirements of a false religion, were never inside a ball-room or a theater until they became Latter-day Saints, and now they seem more anxious for

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[1]Remy, Jules, Voyage au Pays des Mormons, Paris, 1860, Vol. II. p. 151.

[2]Young, Levi Edgar, The Founding of Utah, Charles Scribners' Sons, New York, 1923.

[3]Hyde, John, Jr., Mormonism: Its Leaders and Designs, W.P. Fetridge & Co., New York, 1857. p. 36.

[4]Burton, R.F., The City of the Saints, Harper and Brothers, New York 1862. pp. 230-231.

[5]Widtsoe, John A., Discourses of Brigham Young, Deseret Book Co., 1929, p. 373.

this kind of amusement than are our children. This arises from the fact they have been starved for many years for that amusement which is designed to buoy up their spirits and make their bodies vigorous and strong, and tens of thousands have sunk into untimely graves for want of such exercises to the body and mind. They require mutual nourishment to make them sound and healthy. Every faculty and power of both body and mind is a gift from God. Never say that means used to create and continue healthy action of body and mind are from hell.[1] 9:244

I am opposed to making a cotillion hall a place of worship.[2] 9:194

I am opposed to have cotillions or theatrical performances in this Tabernacle. I am opposed to making this a fun hall, I do not mean for wickedness, I mean for the recuperation of our spirits and bodies. I am not willing that they should convert the house that has been set apart for religious meetings into a dancing hall.[3] 9:195

Those who cannot serve God with a pure heart in the dance should not dance.[4] 6:149

If you want to dance, run a foot race, pitch quoits, or play at ball, do it, and exercise your bodies, and let your minds rest.[5] 6:149

In a speech given in the Old Tabernacle on April 9, 1852, he admonished the people to be careful in their recreations, and not to mingle in such activities when away from the body of the Church. Particularly did he instruct the Elders who were going out as missionaries.

The whole world could not hire a good, honest, sound Presbyterian, of the old fashion and cut, to look into a room where a company of young men and women were dancing, lest they should sin against the Holy Ghost...Some wise being organized my system, and gave me my capacity, put into my heart and brain something that delights, charms, and fills me with rapture at the sound of sweet music. I did not put it there...It was the Lord, our Heavenly Father, who gave the capacity to enjoy these sounds...But the greater portion of the sectarian world consider it sacrilege to give way to any

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[1]Widtsoe, John A., Discourses of Brigham Young, Deseret Book Co., 1925, p. 373.
[2]Ibid. p. 378. 9:244
[3]Ibid. p. 374. 9:194
[4]Ibid. pp. 374-375 9:195
[5]Ibid. p. 375 6:149

> such pleasure as even to listen to sweet music, much more to dance to its delightful strains.[1]

He continued:

> I had not a chance to dance when I was young, and never heard the enchanting tones of the violin, until I was eleven years of age; and then I thought I was on the high way to hell, if I suffered myself to linger and listen to it. I shall not subject my little children to such a course of unnatural training, but they shall go to the dance, study music, read novels, and do anything else that will tend to expand their frames, add fire to their spirits, improve their minds, and make them feel free and untrammeled in body and mind. Let everything come in its season, place everything in the place designed for it, and do everything in its right time.[2]

According to Spencer, the Young family enjoyed many outings at Brighton Resort and on the Great Salt Lake. President Young built and launched the first pleasure craft, a forty foot boat, used on Great Salt Lake. Aptly enough it was named the Timely Gull.[3]

The Mormons were instructed to maintain balance in their day's activities, and not to play until they had discharged the full responsibilities of their religious duties. Most of their recreational activities were held during the winter season, and as the spring farming came on Brigham's people were admonished to bring their dancing parties to a close and to attend to their other labors.

Brigham Young believed that his people should be spiritually rounded in their recreational activities. He said:

> When you go to amuse, or recreate yourselves in any manner whatever, if you cannot enjoy the Spirit of the Lord then and there, as you would at a prayer meeting, leave that place; and return not to such amusements or recreation.[4]

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[1]Young, Brigham, Journal of Discourses, Vol. I, p. 48.
[2]Ibid.
[3]Spencer, C.Y., One Who Was Valiant, 1940, p. 170.
[4]Young, Brigham, Journal of Discourses, Vol. I. p. 113.

Later he stated:

> Is there anything immoral in recreation? If I see my sons and daughters enjoying themselves, chatting, visiting, riding, going to a party or dance, is there anything immoral in that? I watch very closely and if I hear a word, see a look, or a sneer at divine things or anything derogatory to a good moral character, I feel it in a moment, and I say, "If you follow that it will not lead to good, it is evil..."[1]

At a dancing party in 1854 he said:

> I consider this a suitable place to give some instructions. The world considers it very wicked for a Christian to hear music and to dance.[2]

Then he went on to justify dancing.

A public building was built first in every community. This served for the local school, for a house of worship and for socials. Later developments were for church buildings in organized wards which included separate recreation halls attached to each church.

In the days of Mormon beginnings in Utah towns the whole family went to the dance. The babies slept in baskets, boxes, or bundles of blankets, and the children probably romped during the early part of the evening, but slept on the benches as the night wore on.

Parties always were opened with prayer and dancing parties were started with a grand march. Waltzes, polkas, Scotch reels, minuets, and quadrilles kept the merrymakers busy until around midnight, when family basket lunches were opened. Sometimes a group lunch would be served to all. Their parties often continued to two or three in the morning and closed with prayer.

Mormon settlements were made by individuals who were sent. They were chosen for their ability to contribute to economic and social progress. It was the practice to send people of special abilities to colonize a new area.

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[1]Widtsoe, J.A., Editor: Brigham Young Discourses, Deseret Book Company, Salt Lake City, Utah, 1925. pp. 365-366.

[2]Cowley, M.F., Wilford Woodruff, Deseret News Co., Salt Lake City, Utah, 1909. p. 354.

When settlements were made, "President Brigham Young saw to it that each town had its share of good musicians."[1]

The Mormon pioneers from the Mississippi Valley environment and those with a more staid eastern heredity preserved many of the more formal types of dances they had acquired as a social heritage. They danced successively on rough grounds, on rough floorings, and finally in amusement halls. They wore the heavy shoes and clothes, first of the emigrant, later of the worker, and eventually of the accomplishing farmer. The surroundings, the clothing, and the environment would sometimes affect the finesse with which a dance figure would be executed.

The conduct of persons at dances during the emigration and into this century would not be considered always "controlled." Reports may indicate that some dances and dancers may have been robust, but they were never rowdy. During the first years in Utah, the performance of dances was generally conservative, stately, and genteel. The unfinished buildings, the orchestra, and the presence of tired and sleeping children, however, did not lend a "ballroom atmosphere."

The emigrants who had been converted in the many mission fields had their own mores and customs. Social activity, recreation, and dancing were the strong assimilation factors that brought them into the group. The desire to play is common to all peoples and was one of the fundamental means of bringing about and maintaining group solidarity. In giving up their homelands and their old mores, and in taking up a new abode and a new religion they were in position for full acceptance of new social ways. The whole territory was isolated socially, geographically, and culturally, and they were in a

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[1]Carter, Kate B., Heart Throbs of the West, Lesson Pamphlet of February 1944. p. 493.

position to develop their new modes of behavior with no significant objections.

President Brigham Young counselled parents to lead out in recreation with their children. He advised bishops in their settlements to encourage all phases of recreational programs. Sunday Schools were given encouragement to have parties and dances. The Young Ladies' Mutual Improvement Association and the Young Mens' Mutual Improvement Association took on the responsibility of recreation in the arts. Emphasis has been given in dance, as may be witnessed in the June Conferences of recent years when the auxiliary or organizations of the church bring together participating members from all over the world. Modern dances and the old dances have brought several thousand performers to this annual display, where the presentation is coordinated into a colorful and memorable portrayal of church youth who dance. Brigham Young promoted recreation and dance because it was expedient to do so. The groundwork was laid, but the organizations that carried on his philosophy were developed in later days.

While the Mormons by social and geographic ostracism were able to overcome the opposition of most Protestants to dance, still it should not be thought that they were "left wing" in dancing. It might be called to the attention again that they were admonished not to go to public dances nor to mix with the gentiles, that round dances (partner dances) were kept at a minimum, and that employment of the waist swing was discouraged. They were more "middle of the road." This is what some other groups are doing in the 1850's.

> Of all frontier amusements, dancing continued to hold first place. In the towns every new building that went up was the signal for a dance by way of dedication. This was accompanied by the little brown jug and a feast. This custom known as "house warming" was varied by the Methodists who ruled out the dance and liquor, but enjoyed a good meal and games. In more

> religious communities everybody played authors. Dances were the universal indoor amusement, however. They were held on every holiday, and on any other occasion for which an excuse could be found. They were held in homes, barns, stores, restaurants, courthouses, hotel dining rooms,and even on the prairie.
>
> A man in Buffalo County, Dakota Territory, went to a place about ten in the morning and found the family just arising. The ceiling bore marked evidence of a dance the previous evening; there were marks on it made by male dancers. It was the custom for a gentleman to swing his lady around and kick the ceiling, then swing her around and kick the ceiling again. One dancer could not kick any higher than the wainscoting but just the same he was considered a good old sport.[1]

In many other towns of the frontier from 1850-1900 parties were given which would compare with those held by the Mormons on the dirt floors of pioneer cabins, in amusement halls, and in the old Social Hall. That is they had parties, balls, and cotillions in which people conducted themselves with decorum and dignity. Everett Dick reports a number of each variety.[2]

The dancing in which Mormon people have participated has been of two main types, although the one has been an outgrowth of the other. The typical early American rounds, squares, reels, and waltzes of the 19th Century are now called "folk dances," although it was the "social dance" form of that century. The dance identified with the 20th Century is primarily "social dance" with the revival of the older forms. Of folk dance it is said:

> ...the customs of the folk were based not upon the development of individual personality but upon group living and group interests. In such a culture, the individual being owned by the group and to a large extent identical with it in feeling, must have felt a deep allegiance to it and have delighted in expressing, through custom-regulated ceremonial, his own participation in group ideals and customs;...The movements themselves are natural and instinctive... allowing for abandonment and freedom of expression. They give the

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[1]Dick, Everett, The Sod-House Frontier, 1854-1890, D. Appleton-Century Company, Inc., New York, 1938. pp. 365-366.

[2]Ibid. pp. 364-371.

> spirit full play without any premium on formal technique, and their appeal is that of directness, vigor, simplicity, and vitality...They were meant to be shared and understood.[1]

The dances of these people did not require a high degree of skill for performance, and they brought the people together in this phase of their living, making an individual participation in group and total solidarity. There was a potency in group relationships and group interaction. Individuals assembled from various sections blended into the group through dancing activity. Dance was a means of assimilation, and of true socialization. Converts from foreign lands, through the gateway of dance activity, had social access to individuals with whom they could have had little language intercourse. With a community of action, and mutual basis for participation, there were sown the seeds of a culture pattern.

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints has continued to give emphasis to dance in all of its reputable forms. Ballet, ballroom, folk, square and modern dance carry a cultural and quality expression. Dance is a contemporary, cultural, creditable activity in Utah, stemming from early Mormon practices and practiced by modern Mormons.

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[1]H'Doubler, Margaret, Dance--A Creative Art Experience, F. S. Crofts & Co., New York, 1940. pp. 22-23.